

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, JM
SUBJECT: EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THE JAMAICAN ELECTIONS

1. SUMMARY: WHILE EDITORIAL WRITERS OFFERED RELATIVELY
TEPID -- AND RATHER CAREFULLY BALANCED -- COMMENT ON THE
DECEMBER 15 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN JAMAICA, COLUMNISTS
OFFERED MORE INTERESTING FARE. THOSE WHO HAD FAVORED THE
JAMAICA LABOUR PARTY (JLP) SOUGHT TO PUT THE BEST FACE
POSSIBLE ON THE RESULTS WHILE THOSE WHO FAVORED THE RULING
PEOPLE'S NATIONAL PARTY (PNP) SUGGESTED THAT THE PNP'S
VICTORY WAS BUT ONE STEP ON THE PATH TO SOCIALISM. END
SUMMARY.

2. OF JAMAICA'S THREE DAILIES, THE TWO MORNING PAPERS --
"THE GLEANER" AND "DAILY NEWS" -- OFFERED THE MORE
SUBSTANTIAL COMMENT ON THE RESULTS OF THE
DECEMBER 15 ELECTIONS IN JAMAICA. BOTH CONGRATU-
LATED THE MANLEY GOVERNMENT ON ITS LANDSLIDE
VICTORY AT THE POLLS IN THEIR IMMEDIATE POST-
ELECTION LEAD EDITORIALS ON DECEMBER 16. UNDER THE
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HEADING "MAGNIFICENT", "THE GLEANER" OBSERVED: "THE
ELECTORATE YESTERDAY GAVE A RESOUNDING YES TO THE PNP
AND ITS POLICIES FOR A SECOND TERM, AND MAINTAINED A
JAMAICAN TRADITION OF AFFORDING EACH GOVERNMENT TWO
TERMS. WE CONGRATULATE THE PNP AND ALL THEIR WINNING
CANDIDATES ON A MAGNIFICENT VICTORY. THEIRS IS A

HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY, AND THEY HAVE THE OVERWHELMING CONFIDENCE OF THE JAMAICAN VOTERS. "THE GLEANER" CONTINUED: "...WE HAVE A TEAM IN GOVERNMENT WITH A MANDATE TO RESTORE THE ECONOMY, AND TO PROVIDE SOCIAL JUSTICE." EMPHASIZING THE NEED TO HEAL THE WOUNDS OF THE DIVISIVE AND BITTER CAMPAIGN, THE EDITORIAL CONCLUDED WITH A CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION TO "BURY THE HATCHET OF BITTERNESS AND MUTUAL SUSPICION, AND JOIN TOGETHER IN THEIR RESPECTIVE ROLES TO CREATE THE JUST SOCIETY."

3. "THE DAILY NEWS", IN AN EDITORIAL HEADED "PEOPLE'S VOICE", SAID: "THE PEOPLE YESTERDAY TROD THE ROAD TO DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM, ARM IN ARM WITH THE PEOPLE'S NATIONAL PARTY AND ITS LEADER MICHAEL MANLEY." OBSERVING THAT THE "ROAD" THE PEOPLE TROD HAD ITS ROCKY PORTIONS (REFERRING TO ALLEGATIONS OF BALLOT FIDDLING) "THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT ABOUT THEIR INTENT...THE SIZE OF THE PNP VICTORY RULES OUT ANY DETOUR." COMPLIMENTING MR. SEAGA'S CONCESSION SPEECH AS "STATESMANLIKE" AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S CHARGE TO THE PNP TO ACCEPT THEIR VICTORY WITH "DISCIPLINE...HUMILITY...MODESTY...AND RESTRAINT", THE "DAILY NEWS" OBSERVED THAT THE CAMPAIGN WAS PERHAPS "THE MOST BITTER THIS COUNTRY HAS SEEN" AND CALLED FOR THE "EXPUNGING" EXCESSES FROM THE NATIONAL LIFE. IN CONCLUSION, THE EDITORIAL CONGRATULATED THE PNP ON A "BRILLIANT VICTORY" AND CALLED ON THE JLP TO "PICK YOURSELF UP, START ALL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OVER AGAIN."

4. IN A FOLLOW-UP THE NEXT MORNING, THE "DAILY NEWS" (WHICH IS CUSTOMARILY SUPPORTIVE OF THE PNP GOVERNMENT) CALLED ATTENTION IN ITS LEAD EDITORIAL TO THE FACT THAT THE MARGIN OF DEFEAT OF THE JLP IN PARLIAMENTARY SEATS (47 TO 13) WAS "CLEARLY NOT REFLECTED IN THE POPULAR VOTES" WHICH HAD SWUNG BY NOT MUCH MORE THAN 2 PERCENT TO THE PNP FROM THE PARTIES 1972 SHARE OF THE VOTE. THE BALANCE OF THE EDITORIAL WAS DEVOTED TO AN EXAMINATION OF THE REASONS FOR THE JLP'S "STAGGERING LOSSES". IN ESSENCE, IT CONCLUDED THAT THESE WERE DUE TO THE PARTY'S SEPARATION, SINCE 1972, FROM ITS MASS BASE IN THE BUSTAMENTE INDUSTRIAL TRADE UNION (BITU), THE UNION WHOSE POLITICAL ARM IT HAD BEEN IN THE PAST.

5. IN ITS DECEMBER 17 MORNING EDITION, "THE GLEANER"

ONCE AGAIN TURNED ITS ATTENTION TO THE PARLOUS STATE OF THE JAMAICAN ECONOMY. CALLING ON THE GOVERNMENT, NOW THAT IT HAS A "CLEAR MANDATE FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS" TO PAY IMMEDIATE ATTENTION TO MEASURES TO GET THE ECONOMY MOVING AGAIN. 'THE GLEANER' EDITORIAL OBSERVED THAT "NOW THERE CAN BE NO EXCUSE FOR HAVING ONE EYE ON THE ECONOMY AND THE OTHER EYE ON THE VOTER. A LOT OF DIFFICULT DECISIONS WILL HAVE TO BE MADE AND UNPOPULAR MEASURES INTRODUCED, BUT IT MUST BE DONE."..."IT SHOULD BE EQUALLY EVIDENT TO BOTH THE PEOPLE AND THE POLITICIANS THAT THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION TO THESE PROBLEMS LIES IN PRODUCTION. THE ELECTORATE HAS VOTED FOR A SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT AND, THEREFORE, THE ELECTORATE WILL HAVE TO BE MADE TO UNDERSTAND THAT SOCIALISM IS NOT A SYSTEM WHICH AUTOMATICALLY MEANS A HIGHER STANDARD OF LIVING...(WHICH CAN ONLY) BE IMPROVED BY INCREASING THE WEALTH OF THE COUNTRY WHICH IS TO BE DISTRIBUTED
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BUTED." THE EDITORIAL CONCLUDED BY URGING THE NEW GOVERNMENT TO IMPRESS ON JAMAICANS THAT "TO REDUCE CONSUMPTION AND INCREASE PRODUCTION IS THE FORMULA TO GET THE ECONOMY MOVING AGAIN. THE SOONER, THE BETTER."

6. COMMENT: EDITORIALS NOTWITHSTANDING, MOST POLITICAL COMMENTARY IN THE JAMAICAN MEDIA IS THE PROVINCE OF INDIVIDUAL COLUMNISTS RATHER THAN OF EDITORIAL WRITERS. MOST COLUMNISTS RESPONDED TO

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THE ELECTION RESULTS ACCORDING TO THEIR PREDICTIONS, WHICH ARE APPARENT TO THOSE WHO KNOW THEM AND ALMOST MEANINGLESS TO THOSE WHO DO NOT. AMONG THOSE WHOSE SUPPORT FOR THE JLP WAS AT LEAST IMPLICIT, THERE WAS A MINIMUM OF SOUR GRAPES AND A VIEW THAT THE CONSENSUS HOLDS THAT THE COUNTRY NEEDS WOUNDS HEALED AND THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS OF THE JAMAICAN ECONOMY TO WORK TOGETHER. AMONG THE MOST SIGNIFICANT OF THE POST-ELECTION COLUMNS WRITTEN BY PNP SYMPATHIZERS WAS ONE BY THE PRINCIPAL POLITICAL REPORTER FOR THE "DAILY NEWS", CANUTE JAMES. ITS SIGNIFICANCE LAY NOT IN ITS INHERENT WISDOM OR SAGACITY, BUT AS A HARBINGER OF THINGS TO COME. IT SEEMS QUITE CERTAIN THAT JAMES IS TO BECOME THE NEW EDITOR OF HIS PAPER -- FORMALIZING A LEFT-LEANING INFLUENCE WHICH HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY APPARENT. JAMES, IN A SIGNED COLUMN ON DECEMBER 17, WHICH WAS HEADED "WE STILL NEED TO BE CAUTIOUS", WARNED THAT "INTERESTS AND ELEMENTS WHICH STILL FEEL THEMSELVES THREATENED BY CONTINUED DEMONSTRATIONS (OF JAMAICAN INDEPENDENCE) MAY FEEL

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MOVED TO ACT IN THE BELIEF THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO DEFY THE WILL OF THE MAJORITY OF JAMAICANS. IF WE ACCEPT THE POSTULATION -- AND THERE HAS BEEN NOTHING TO DISPROVE IT --, HE CONTINUED, "THAT IN RECENT MONTHS THE ISLAND'S ECONOMIC AND SECURITY PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN EXACERBATED BY LOCAL AND EXTERNAL ELEMENTS...FROM THEORY TO REALITY, THEN WE MAY BE ABLE TO ACCEPT THAT A STATE OF CAUTION AND WARINESS IS NEEDED." DESPITE THE OVERWHELMING SUPPORT OF PNP PROGRAMS AND POLICIES, JAMES OBSERVED, "ELECTED SOCIALIST GOVERNMENTS IN OUR PART OF THE WORLD HAVE AN UNFORTUNATE AND BRUTALLY SHORT HISTORY." IN THE FACE OF THE AUSTERITIES WHICH ARE UNDOUBTEDLY FACING THE JAMAICAN SOCIETY, IT IS PROBABLE THAT THE CHARGES AND INNUENDO OF "IMPERIALIST DESTABILIZATION" ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE FROM ONE OF JAMAICA'S TWO PRINCIPAL DAILY NEWSPAPERS.

GERARD

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